

To Combat the Mental Health & Substance Use Public Health Crisis Employer, Physician and Policy Groups Partner

The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use will improve access to effective care

WASHINGTON – November 12, 2019 – Rates of suicide and drug-related deaths are at record levels. This crisis is being exacerbated by inadequate access to care for mental health and substance use for Americans across the country. To realign market forces to focus on a more sustainable approach and ensure affordable access to high value, effective treatment, a group of influential non-profits announced a partnership to implement The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use.

The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions, American Psychiatric Association, American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health and Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute have launched The Path Forward initiative to execute a disciplined, private sector approach to systematically and measurably improve five established best practices of mental health and substance use care.

“We’ve made great progress in improving acceptance and reducing stigma around mental health,” said Michael Thompson, National Alliance President & CEO. “However, at the same time affordable access to all levels of behavioral treatment continues to decline – we can no longer stand by and let this continue to happen.”

The collaborative will focus on clear and attainable reforms and demonstrable outcomes. The Path Forward will also leverage the influence of employers and regional employer coalitions motivated for change, supported by the technical expertise and guidance of leading behavioral health experts. Unique to this collaboration will be disciplined and intensive engagement teams focused on six regions that will be announced in the near future and leveraged nationwide.

“Through this program we aim to create a systemic tipping point with the potential of helping anyone who needs mental health or addiction care get it, wherever and whenever they need it,” said Andy Keller, PhD, President and CEO of Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute. “A country where every person with depression is cared for in the same way that they receive care for their heart disease or diabetes is within our grasp but can only be achieved through this type of unprecedented, transformational cooperation.”

Five Priority Strategies

Five Priority Strategies that constitute our nation’s best opportunity to positively transform behavioral healthcare at a population level will be implemented to move forward in improving access to effective detection and treatment. These best practices, derived from eValue8, a National Alliance tool that defines, measures and evaluates health plan performance, include:

1. Improve network access for behavioral health specialists
2. Expand use of collaborative care to integrate behavioral health into primary care
3. Implement measurement-based care to improve quality and outcomes
4. Expand tele-behavioral health
5. Ensure mental health parity compliance

“There is a critical need in the US to improve access to mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and by raising the awareness of mental health issues with employers and connecting

employees to treatment we will see an increase in employee productivity, lower absenteeism and presenteeism, and decreases in overall healthcare cost,” said APA CEO and Medical Director Saul Levin, MD, MPA. “The APA and the APA Foundation have been developing resources for employers to ensure their employees have access to high quality, evidence-based mental healthcare.”

Henry Harbin, MD, former CEO of Magellan and adviser to the National Alliance, commented, “This collaborative of key employers and employer coalitions, allied with leading mental health and substance use experts, is totally unprecedented in US history. It has the potential to significantly improve outcomes for all people with these conditions.”

[Learn more about The Path Forward for Mental Health and Substance Use here.](#)

About National Alliance

The National Alliance of Healthcare Purchaser Coalitions is the only nonprofit, purchaser-led organization with a national and regional structure dedicated to driving health and healthcare value across the country. Our members represent more than 12,000 employers/purchasers and 45 million Americans spending over \$300 billion annually on healthcare. To learn more, visit nationalalliancehealth.org, connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About American Psychiatric Association

The American Psychiatric Association (APA), founded in 1844, is the oldest medical association in the country. The APA is also the largest psychiatric association in the world with more than 38,500 physician members specializing in the diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses. APA’s vision is to ensure access to quality psychiatric diagnosis and treatment. For more information visit psychiatry.org.

About American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health

The American Psychiatric Association Foundation, a subsidiary of the APA, works to create a mentally healthy nation by advancing mental health, overcoming mental illness and eliminating stigma. The Center for Workplace Mental Health helps employers create a more supportive workplace for their employees and advance mental health at their organizations For more information, visit workplacementalhealth.org.

About Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Since its public launch in 2014, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) has helped Texas legislators, government officials, members of the judiciary, and local leaders identify systemic mental health needs and solutions, quickly becoming Texas’s most trusted source for data-driven mental health policy. MMHPI is helping Texas leaders address the mental health crisis in our jails and emergency rooms, improve access to care for veterans and their families, shift the focus of new investments toward early intervention, and expand the mental health workforce. Learn more about MMHPI at texasstateofmind.org.

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